

BOOK REVIEW

FRANKLIN W. MARTIN, RUTH M. RUBERTE, and LAURA S. MEITZNER. 1998. **Edible Leaves of the Tropics. Third Edition.** (ISBN 0-9653360-1-8, pbk.). ECHO, 17430 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, FL 33917, U.S.A. \$14.95, 194 pp, b&w plates, 6" × 9".

This third edition of *Edible Leaves of the Tropics* puts back in print this classic that has been unavailable for 15 years. Published by the Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization, Inc. or ECHO, this text is a primary resource used by the staff in answering questions of development workers in the tropics and subtropics. This edition updates the 1981 edition with new information from scientific publications and the insights of the ECHO staff and at the same time retains much of the information and style from Martins original.

Leaves are a high quality food in the tropics and "developing" nations, not only because of their nutritional value but also the little effort required in their production. This text describes tropical plants with edible leaves, discussing their origin, growth, habit, cultivation guidelines, nutritional value, preparation, multiple uses, and cautions. The book is divided into ten chapters, followed by a list of seed sources and resources, a bibliography, an appendix on tropical plants with edible leaves (over 1500 species), and an index to genera and common names. Chapters one through ten cover 89 pages and discuss the place of green leaves in the diet, the principal green leaf herbs of the tropics, common weeds with edible leaves, temperate zone green leaves, lettuce, poisonous leaves, and culture and care of green-leafed vegetables. Following chapter ten are 56 pages of "Illustrations." However there are no illustrations, but black and white photographs of plants, the quality of which ranges from poor to good. There is more than one photo where sterile specimens are pictured and one that is hardly visible. The appendix on tropical plants with edible leaves is this books strong point and defines it as a "source" book. This appendix, twenty-six pages in length, covers over 1500 species, their latin name, source (Congo, Tropical Africa, India, etc.), and type (shrub, herb, vine). It would be useful for the common names to be included in this table for future editions.

Edible Leaves of the Tropics is a useful book for anyone interested in tropical botany, gardening, and the nutrition of tropical diets. Not necessarily appropriate for classes, this is primarily a source book and should yield a considerably diverse readership that will continue to justify its existence. It is well written and researched and available for a modest price. I would recommend this book for anyone interested in finding an inventory of edible tropical plants for either their own research or consumption.—Kevin D. Janni, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.,kjanni@brit.org.